



September

# Member Newsletter

## Know your triggers

When exposed to certain conversations, events or situations, many people experience “emotional triggers” that may remind them of something upsetting in their past. These triggers can spark strong emotional and physical feelings that may prompt people to respond or react in unhealthy ways, feeling tense, anxious, panicky, sad or angry, or having the urge to withdraw or lash out. Getting to know your triggers can help you learn better, healthier ways to respond.

Try these suggestions:

**Tune into your body’s responses.** Did a situation or a remark from someone make your stomach or chest tighten or cause your mind to go blank? Before you respond, take a moment to step away, count to ten, and take a few deep, slow breaths. Calming your system in this way can help you form a healthier response. For example, upon reflection, you may consider using “I feel” statements vs. using angry, accusatory “you” statements.

**Write down your negative feelings instead of judging them or bottling them up.** It’s not always easy to pinpoint what your triggers are. Writing down the details about an upsetting circumstance and how you felt can help you more readily identify your triggers, what’s behind them, and work through the best ways to respond when similar situations arise.

**Silently name your uncomfortable emotions.** Telling yourself, “I’m feeling very impatient right now,” for example, is another way to help tame triggering emotions so you’re not ruled by them.

**Practice positive self-talk.** Telling yourself phrases like “I can weather this situation” can help you regulate emotions and feel more in control.

**Remember, you can actively shift your mental state!** And you can choose how, or whether, you want to react or respond.

**Talk to a counselor.** This is especially helpful if you have experienced a traumatic situation, have PTSD and/or are unable to manage your triggers. Cognitive behavior therapy, medication and other methods can also be helpful.



## It's time for a cholesterol screening!

September is National Cholesterol Screening month! This serves as a good reminder to have your cholesterol levels checked. High levels of this fatty, waxy substance can build up in the arteries, raising the risk for heart disease, the leading cause of death, and for stroke, the fifth leading cause of death ([CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)). Getting a simple blood test is the only way to determine your risk. If your cholesterol is high, there are simple steps to help reduce it and improve your health. Here's what you need to know:

**When to get screened.** The American Heart Association recommends that all adults age 20 or older have their cholesterol and other traditional risk factors checked every four to six years as long as their risk remains low ([Heart.org](https://www.heart.org)). People with cardiovascular disease and those at elevated risk may need their cholesterol and other risk factors assessed more often. Ask your doctor how often you should get screened.

**What's tested.** Your doctor can give you a lipoprotein profile test, which tests your blood for total cholesterol levels, LDL (low-density lipoprotein, or “bad” cholesterol), HDL (high-density lipoprotein, or “good” cholesterol), and triglycerides (another lipid in the blood, often related to foods you eat). ([NIH.gov](https://www.nih.gov))

If your company offers onsite health screenings that include cholesterol screening, follow up with your doctor to discuss the results.

Talk with your provider about what your results mean for you and how to manage your cholesterol.

### How to manage undesirable cholesterol levels

- Eat low-fat, high-fiber food, like fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.
- Quit tobacco.
- Maintain a healthy weight—and watch your waistline! Too much abdominal fat is linked to high cholesterol.
- Exercise—adults should aim to get 2 hours and 30 minutes of moderate exercise weekly, or 1 hour and 15 minutes of vigorous physical activity each week.
- Additionally, your doctor may prescribe medication to help treat your high cholesterol.

# Get fit for life!

It's common to let daily exercise fall by the wayside as life's responsibilities pile on, or as you become older and activity levels drop. Or perhaps you never made getting fit a habit in the first place! No matter the reason, now is the time to remind yourself that it's never too late to start reaping the benefits of exercise. It's one of the best things you can do for your health and well-being. Start enjoying the benefits of exercise today—use these tips to plan your workout routine.



## Exercise tips for adults (18-64)

- Aim to get at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise each week, like brisk walking, or 75 minutes of vigorous exercise each week such as hiking uphill.
- Take time to build your endurance by including strengthening activities at least two days a week.

## Exercise tips for older adults (65+)

- In addition to the tips above, if you are in this age group it's important to incorporate balance exercises to improve your coordination and help reduce falling. Tai chi, yoga and Pilates are great exercises to try.
- When selecting exercises, choose those that will help you become more efficient in your day-to-day activities, like arm and wrist strengthening to help you lift everyday objects.

## For all ages:

- Start slow. Look for opportunities to get—and keep—your body moving, such as discovering a new route to walk around your neighborhood or easy trails through nearby parks. The more you walk, the more you will want to walk!
- Link up with others to keep motivated. Join a class, whether it's pickleball, water aerobics at the Y, Latin dance, or something else. Or set a regular date to buddy up with a friend to walk or ride bikes.
- Entice yourself. Get snazzy sneakers or exercise wear, a wristwatch with an exercise reminder app, or a playlist and earphones to help keep you energized while you walk or exercise.



**Whatever you do, keep moving!**

**For more help,** talk to Health Advocate, your health practitioner or a qualified counselor.

## Suicide Prevention Awareness Month



It's important to know that suicidal thoughts can affect anyone regardless of age, gender or background. Anyone who is feeling depressed or overwhelmed by grief, loss, money or relationship problems, health issues or even troublesome events could be at risk of struggling with suicidal thoughts. But depression can be treated and there is support to help you overcome your struggles and renew hope, even though it may feel impossible. If you or someone you know is at risk for suicide, watch for the warning signs such as ongoing hopelessness, talking or posting about wanting to die, or dealing with a painful loss. **Seek help right away. Call the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. If you are in imminent danger, call 911.** For a full list of warning signs, risk factors and more, visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/suicide/factors/index.html>